

2018 NC State AFL-CIO Convention Report



The NC State AFL-CIO Convention

September 20-21 2018

Raliegh, NC

It was a true honor to serve as a delegate to the NC AFL-CIO convention. I sincerely thank this membership for allowing me this opportunity. It was a special privilege to attend with MaryBe Mcmillan as the first woman President of the NC State AFL-CIO. MaryBe is not only a great leader she is an inspiration for organizing and rallying people to fight for the better of all North Carolina.

The convention had delegates from unions and civic organizations from across North Carolina. There were delegates and guests of all types of work, community, civic, and political activists. This gathering of the labor leaders and delegates at the 61st convention was for the purpose of building a stronger, more engaged and larger labor movement in North Carolina. We also discussed and planned for the successful running and electing of labor supporting candidates.

The one detail that remained constant with every conversation, speaker, discussion group, or resolution made was to improve the lives of every citizen of North Carolina. NC State Council of Machinist President Theodore McNeal said it best “It is our responsibility to look out for all workers whether in a union or not. It is our responsibility to be the voice for the people who are now voiceless because they don’t have a forum, where to speak, like the seniors”.

MaryBe, along with the board of the AFL-CIO’s leadership, listened and welcomed new ideas from the membership over the past year. They incorporated many of the ideas and created new opportunities for learning via classes on-line and in a class setting in 2018. There was a Twitter Power Academy, Advanced Leadership, and Runaway Inequality. There is a more engaged movement of activism such as the Teachers “Red for Ed” and Raising Wages (15forNC). There was and is a call of Labor 2018 (political training) for candidates across the state. This midterm election has the most candidates ever running and many are Union members or labor candidates. Most of these candidates were recruited by and all, are endorsed by the AFL-CIO.

This convention was also structured differently than in the past. There was much more interaction among the delegates via table discussions (small group discussions on specific topics or issues). Technology was used, like Poll Everywhere, and Live Twitter. This technology allowed us to share the results of our table discussions with the entire delegation in real time. We were also able to share events from the convention and speakers on Live Twitter. A hashtag of #COUNTMEIN was created specifically for this convention. This allows us to reach the larger statewide body of members unable to attend the convention.

They had wonderful, inspiring speakers such as Mary Kay Henry, President, SEIU; J. David Cox, President, AFGE; Josh Stein, Attorney General, as well as others. These speakers were followed up with table discussions on thoughts and ideas from delegates. The delegates shared stories, issues, and solutions and asked for ideas. We also heard from candidates endorsed by the AFL-CIO such as Anita Earls running for NC State Supreme Court and John Motsinger Jr. running for NC State Senate District 31. Governor Roy Cooper was scheduled but unable to attend as he was on the coast dealing and helping victims of Hurricane Florence.

Speaking of Florence; The NC State Council of Machinists routinely holds a meeting in conjunction with this convention. Due to Florence and the number of IAM members that were affected by her, the meeting was rescheduled. The delegates answered the call from President MaryBe and her board to bring necessities for the Disaster Relief Fund. This was coordinated by the NC State AFL-CIO and in conjunction with the national AFL-CIO. It was an emotional moment when delegates from locals across the state stood before the delegation and committed funds for recovery from this disaster.

One of the main purposes of this convention is to establish and adopt resolutions for the body to build on. There were three resolutions brought before this delegation.

Resolution 1: Growing a bigger, broader labor movement in NC

Resolution 2: Building independent political power for working people

Resolution 3: Winning a pro worker policy agenda

All three resolutions were discussed and adopted. The

resolutions give us concrete foundations to build on. Out of this we established a Workers' Bill of Rights.

All working people have the right to:

- A good job with fair wages
- Quality health care
- A safe job
- Paid time off and flexible, predictable scheduling
- Freedom from discrimination
- Retire with dignity
- Education
- Freedom to join together
- A voice in democracy

Labor 2018: The delegation to the 61st convention declares this Workers' Bill of Rights as the standard for which we will demand of candidates wanting our support. We ask all working people in North Carolina, if you support these rights, VOTE for candidates who do!

I along with many of the delegates participated in an informational picket at Circle K to boycott VUSE with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). FLOC is asking everyone to boycott the use of VUSE. VUSE is an RJ Reynolds product. **This boycott will continue** until the company agrees to give farm-workers a voice and negotiate a contract. The pickets at Circle K's are informational, as convenience stores are the largest distributors of VUSE. We ask Circle K owners (as well as other convenient store chains) to stop distributing the product until RJ Reynolds will negotiate and honor a contract

with the farm-workers. As an organization that fights for all workers we felt it not only a duty but a privilege to walk the line with FLOC. This is an example of support and solidarity in action. When we stand together with all workers we build a stronger workforce for everyone.

This convention had a lot accomplished in a very short time. We worked collectively to finish and leave knowing we laid the groundwork for the road ahead. I am, as always when I leave such events in awe and inspired by fellow union workers. Workers who give so much of their time and energy simply for the benefit of others. The vast diversity, circumstances and environments that is represented is as broad and wide as North Carolina. Everyone is eager to work collectively as one unit to help all.

I cannot close without stressing the upcoming midterms. I implore all of you to take this vote seriously and know the outcome will have an effect on our jobs, our families, our livelihoods and more importantly our kids and grand kids life. There are some serious issues such as the amendments that will also be on the ballot. If you are not aware of these amendments, you need to be. Find them, read them, and understand them. Again I have to reiterate if you accept, and support these rights VOTE for candidates that do!

MaryBe continued with the movement of Labor 2018 on Saturday morning in Charlotte where we gathered for membership Labor Walk. This is a knock on doors of AFL-CIO affiliated union members and their family to talk about the candidates we support and why. So if some Saturday morning or early afternoon someone knocks on your door to talk about the midterms please be kind. We are individuals with passion for

these candidates as well as for our union and fellow workers. We truly have good intentions and we only want to talk. We sincerely appreciate your time.

I would be happy and delighted to talk with anyone on becoming a delegate to the NC AFL-CIO and the Southern Piedmont Central Labor Council. Either or both of these organizations are always open for more participation. Remember YOU are the Union. Your participation will make a difference.

In closing I thank you for allowing me to serve as a delegate to this convention.

In solidarity,

Maureen Kelly

Some pictures from the convention!



Checking in delegates to the NC State AFL-CIO 61st Convention.



Charlie and Maureen showing Union Pride.



Maureen Kelly with Attorney General Josh Stein



MaryBe McMillan, President, NC State AFL-CIO



Teddy McNeal President of NCSCM (North Carolina State Council of Machinists) and Harold Black of CWA.



Delegates from across the state



SEIU President Mary Kay Henry



John Motsinger Jr, candidate for NC Senate District 31. Proud union member of I.A.T.S.E. 635.



Anita Earls, NC Supreme Court candidate



Ray Curry receives NC labor movement's highest honor, P.R.Latta award. A Rank-and-File Award. Chosen for his lifetime of service building the power of North Carolina's labor movement.



Attorney General Josh Stein